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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate teacher attitudes with respect to changing to a year-round school program. The hypothesis was that a majority of teachers would be opposed to changing the traditional 180 day schedule to a year-round schedule. The population in this study consisted of all the classroom teachers in a rural county of North Carolina. A cluster sampling of 128 teachers was employed due to the time frame constraints of the study. The research design used was the descriptive survey consisting of questions on demographic data (sex, years of teaching experience, and grade level taught) and four questions to gauge attitudes towards changing to a year-round schedule. Statistics compared each of the attitude survey questions with demographic data. The findings were that a majority of respondents were opposed to changing the schedule. More extensive study of teacher attitudes in this area is needed. The effects of teacher attitude on year-round schooling should not be underestimated. (Author/LL)

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# Attitudes of Teachers
# Concerning Year-Round School Programs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher attitudes on changing to a year-round school program. The hypothesis was that a majority of teachers would be opposed to changing the traditional 180 day schedule to a year-round schedule. The population in this study consisted of all the classroom teachers in a rural county of North Carolina. A cluster sampling of 128 teachers was employed due to the time frame constraints of the study. The research design used was the descriptive survey consisting of questions on demographic data (sex, years of teaching experience, and grade level taught) and four questions to guage attitudes towards changing to a year-round schedule. Statistics compared each of the attitude survey questions with demographic data. The findings were that a majority of the respondents were opposed to changing the schedule. This was true across all demographic areas considered. The researchers would like to see more extensive study of teacher attitudes in this area. The effects of teacher attitude on year-round schooling should not be underestimated.

# Attitudes of Teachers
# Concerning Year-Round School Programs

## Introduction

### Introductory Paragraph and Importance of the Study

The calendar of operation used by most American schools has its roots imbedded very deeply in the agarian society that we once were (Schofield,1974). During the time when school children were needed to tend the crops during the summer of the year, that school calendar made ultimate sense. The demands for organized educational experiences were less insistent: when children had more opportunity than they now have to learn about work, to develop vocational skills and competencies, and to develop a genuine understanding of community life through actual work experiences (American Association of School Administrators, 1960). And yet we hold on to this old school calendar.

Tinkering with the traditional school calendar of September to June may seem like a new and unnecessary idea, but it is neither. Since the 180-day "traditional school year" was developed, three major exceptions to this calendar have emerged: summer school, the extended school year and the year-round school. Among these, the year-round school has proven to be most popular (Quiglin, George, 1987).

Year-round education programs come in a variety of forms. However, all have periods of instruction and vacation that alternate throughout the calendar year. The vacation periods are called intermissions, during which enrichment, acceleration, or remedial programs are usually offered for the students on vacation. Most year-round programs adhere to the traditional school year of 180 days, (Quiglin, George, 1987). The most popular plan is the 45/15 plan.

There has been strong opposition among some teachers over the change to a year-round program. Specifically, opposition is over the disruption in the traditional summer vacation, (Christie, 1987-1988). In May 1984, The Educational Research Service asked a nationwide sample of teachers the following question: "If a commensurate increase in salary were available, would you be willing to work a longer school day or year?" A majority of 52.2 percent were unwilling to work a longer school day. A plurality of 46.6 percent (a majority of those who had an opinion) responded that they rejected a longer school year.

The effects of teacher attitude on year-round schooling should not be underestimated. Hunt (1974) surveyed 117 districts that had completed feasibility studies for implementation of year-round education. The most important predictor of

whether or not a district followed through and implemented the year-round schedule was attitude. Young and Berger (1983) found that parents, teachers, and administrators associated with schools operating on a year-round basis have generally preferred them to the traditional calendar.

## Problem Statement and Hypothesis

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher attitudes concerning changing the traditional 180-day school year to a year-round schedule.

The first hypothesis is that a majority of both male and female teachers will be opposed to changing to a year-round schedule.

The second hypothesis is that regardless of years of teaching experience there will be a majority opposing a change to a year-round schedule.

The third hypothesis is that regardless of the grade level taught there will be a majority of teachers opposed to a year-round schedule.

## Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this research is based upon the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959). The established patterns within an individual's environment are chiefly responsible for forming one's attitudes. Any change in these patterns will create dissonance and therefore resistance to the

change. The initial opposition of most teachers to a change in the length of the traditional school year is based upon this theory.

Literature was reviewed in 3 major areas. These 3 areas are: 1. History of year-round schools, 2. Effects of year-round schools, and, 3. Teacher attitudes concerning year-round schools. This literature came from an ERIC search, dissertation abstract search and an Alladin search.

1.History of year-round schools

The necessity for using all available educational resources to the best possible advantage, and a concern for finding ways to teach more and to teach it better have stood out clearly in recent discussions of educational problems (Shepard, Baker 1977). Year-round schooling is not a new concept. Since the turn of the century, a few school districts, particularly in large urban areas such as Buffalo and Chicago, have from time to time operated schools for 11 or 12 months. This type of scheduling provided a solution to overcrowded conditions without the expense of new school construction (Quinlan, George and Emmett, 1987). In this current era of school overcrowding and tight budgets, many proponents claim that the year-round school is finally catching on. Honig (1986) suggests that

a long summer vacation, required by an earlier agrarian economy, is no longer needed in our largely urban and suburban society. He points to California as the state that has taken the lead in recognizing this fact by instituting numerous year-round school, more than all other states combined.

2. Effects of year-round schools

Research on the effects of year-round schools is limited in quantity and generally inconclusive in nature (Christie, 1989). As is the case with much educational research, researchers have had difficulty in isolating the effects of a particular design — in this instance the year-round school program — from the effects of other variables such as curriculm design, classroom structure, teaching experience, and the effects of change itself.

3. Teacher attitudes concerning year-round schools

Highlights of major research (Merino, 1983: Pelavin, 1979) on the attitudes of educators, parents, and community toward the year-round school are reported below. The literature suggests that several aspects of social life are affected by the introduction of a year-round school. These include community vacation patterns, child care, recreational programs, local business, and many other facets

of teacher/student life.

Out of 13 studies compiled by Merino on teachers' attitudes toward the year-round school only 3 reported negative results. Most of the dissatisfaction stemmed from the burden that some forms of year-round schools placed on teachers.

Teachers' positive attitudes are generally contingent on the amount of support they are given when implementing a year-round schedule (Rice, 1975), the increase in financial benefits (Webb, 1973), and the degree to which the teachers' participation is voluntary (Clauson, 1975).

Pelavin (1979) noted these findings on teacher attitudes toward the year-round school. Teacher attitudes ranged from a general dislike of the year-round school program by traditional calendar school teachers without direct year-round school experience to a broad-based preference of the program by year-round school teachers. The majority of year-round school teachers considered the year-round school program equal or superior to the traditional calendar program in flexibility of work schedule, problems with student discipline, ease of providing remedial services, time lost in getting students to settle down to work after vacations, tiring effects on

students, and learning loss over vacation periods. Year-round school teachers considered coordination of school activities more difficult under the year-round school program and felt that teaching in the program was mor tiring and difficult than teaching in the traditional calendar program.

In summary, the review of literature shows that the year-round school concept is not new. It has frequently been considered as an answer to overcrowding, and tight budgets among other problems. The effects of this concept are not known generally but are being widely studied. Teacher attitudes are generally negative in nature. Teachers with experience in year-round school programs show broad-based support for it, whereas those with no experience are negative towards this scheduling change.

## Research Design

The research design used was the descriptive survey. The use of a questionnaire has some definite advantages over other methods of collecting data that are not available through other sources. In comparison to the use of an interview procedure, for example, a questionnaire is much more efficient in that it requires less time, is less expensive, and permits collection of data from a much larger sample.

The experimental research design is the most productive and demanding method of research. However, in this study it could not be used because there was no independent variable to be manipulated.

The descriptive survey was an adequate design to collect the needed data concerning attitudes of teachers concerning a change to year-round schedules.

Limitations/Delimitations

Ideally, questionnaire respondents would be well acquainted with the details and intricacies of the various year-round school options.

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of all the classroom teachers in a rural county of North Carolina. A cluster sample was used to survey the attitudes of teachers in a high school, middle school and an elementary school. This cluster sampling was employed because the time frame for the study was limited and the schools chosen were readily accessible to the researchers.

The sample consisted of a total of 128 classroom teachers. The high school accounted for 39.8% (51) of the survey group; the middle school 35.9% (46) and the elementary school 24% (31). Of the total group, 27.3% (35) were males and 72.7% (93) females.

Instrumentation

The survey developed was field tested using a group of six elementary teachers at a different school than ones used in the actual survey. This was done to determine if the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure. Several minor changes in wording of the questions on the survey were made as a result of this validation of the survey instrument.

Procedures

The research questions developed in this study were as follows:

1. Would teachers in North Carolina be in favor of any plan for increasing the length of the school year?
2. Would the sex of the teachers affect their attitudes toward increasing the length of the school year?
3. Would the number of years a teacher has taught influence their attitude?
4. Would the grade level taught by teachers have an effect on their attitude towards changing to a year-round school concept?

One hundred twenty-eight teachers received the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was placed in each teacher's mailbox by their school's secretary with instructions to complete and return the questionnaire to the school secretary within three days. At the end of three days the questionnaires were collected from each or the three schools.

The survey instrument on attitudes consisted of four questions concerning the length of the school year. The first three questions related to proposed plans which would increase the length of the school year by 1. Extending the school day by one hour, 2. Extending the school year from 180 to 200 days, and 3. Installing a 45-15 year-round school plan. The fourth question involved overall attitudes toward any change in the length of the present school year. The response to this item was the primary focus of the study. Each question was answered by indicating whether they were in favor of the proposition, opposed to it, or didn't know.

The returned questionnaires were numbered and yielded one hundred and two CASE ID's associated with their attitude responses and demographic data (sex, teaching experience and grade level taught).

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Analysis for the Social Sciences (SPSS) on the VAX/VMS computer system. Data was processed using crosstabulations showing frequencies and percentages in regards to the four attitude questions as compared to each category of demographic data.

## Research Findings and Results

In regards to hypothesis one the data shows that a majority of both male and female respondents were opposed to lengthening the school day by one hour to increase the length of the school year (90.2%). On extending the school year from 180 to 200 days 84.6% of males and 88.2% of females opposed this proposition. Concerning implementing a 45-15 plan, 76.9% of the males and 67.1% of females opposed. And in response to making any changes in the length of the school year,male respondents opposed 80.8% and females opposed 71.1%.

Concerning hypothesis two, the data shows that the years of teaching experience did not significantly affect responses. A majority was opposed in each group in response to all four questions. Question #1, 90.2% opposed; question #2, 87.3% opposed; question #3, 69.6% opposed; and #4, 73.5% opposed.

In addressing the third hypothesis, the data shows

that a majority of teachers at all grade levels (90.2%) opposed adding one hour to each day; a majority (87.3%) opposed extending the schedule from 180 days to 200 days; a majority (69.6%) opposed implementing a 45-15 plan; and concerning any changes in the traditional schedule a majority (73.5%) opposed .

## Discussion

The results of this study support all three research hypotheses. Regardless of the demographic breakdown (sex, years of teaching experience, or grade level taught) the majority of respondents reflected negative attitudes towards changes in the traditional 180-day school year. It is the feeling of the researchers that this is a fair reflection of teacher attitudes in general.

As indicated by the theoretical framework of this study, established patterns within the teaching environment are chiefly responsible for forming teacher attitudes. Proposed changes in the traditional 180-day schedule create initial opposition due to fears of infringing on everything from atheletic schedules to ending summer vacations.

Implications for those envisioning such changes in the school year are clear. Teachers need to be well

informed and involved throughout the process of making any changes in the scheduling of the school year. Initially participation should be by choice and carefully studied before widespread implementation occurs.

Due to the restraints on the researchers in such areas as time limitations, money, and size of the sample it is recommended this area of teacher attitudes be further studied on a much broader basis. It is hoped that through further studies significant progress can be made in noting the importance of teacher attitudes and input in this and other concerns.

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